



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE FIRST NATIONAL NOMINATING CONVENTION, 1808

THE national party convention as a method of nominating candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency dates back in unbroken line to the election of 1832. Long before that, however, the same method was secretly employed by the Federalist party. The Federalist convention of 1812, described in the first volume of this REVIEW by Mr. John S. Murdock,¹ has hitherto been regarded as the solitary instance of a national party convention before 1831. This can no longer be maintained, for new material has recently come to light² which tells the story of a secret meeting of Federalist leaders in New York in 1808 that nominated Pinckney and King for the presidency and vice-presidency, and served as a model for the convention of 1812. This was the original national nominating convention.

A peculiar problem of the Federalist party, repeated in 1808 and in 1812, brought about this premature appearance of the key-stone to modern party machinery. On each occasion the policy pursued by the Republicans—in 1808, embargo; in 1812, war with Great Britain—seemed absolutely destructive to the class and sectional interests represented by the Federalists. It was vitally necessary for them to defeat Madison at any cost. In each year an insurgent Democrat—in both cases a Clinton—entered the presidential race with more or less of the Federalist policies as his platform. The question before the Federalist party then, was whether to run their own candidates, or, with much greater chance of winning, to back the insurgent already in the field. Some method was necessary to reach a decision on this point that would be binding on the whole party. One alternative was to adopt the Congressional caucus, the prevailing method of presidential nomination in the Republican party. But to this there were many objections. The Federalists had already, in 1800, found the caucus ineffective for party harmony. In 1808, moreover, there were too few Federalists at Washington to make a Federalist caucus practicable, and the growing unpopular-

¹ "The First National Nominating Convention", AM. HIST. REV., I. 680.

² The Harrison Gray Otis MSS., in the writer's possession. Documents cited in this article are from the Otis MSS., unless otherwise noted.

ity of this method, even in the Republican party, was counted on by the Federalists as part of their political capital against Madison. A convention of delegates was the only alternative.

Early in 1808 the political situation, in regard to the approaching presidential election, was as follows. For the Federalists the outlook was extremely gloomy. In looking over the list of electoral votes³ it was hard to see how 89, a majority, could be secured for a Federalist candidate. Since the election of 1804, in which Pinckney and King received but fourteen electoral votes, the party had continued to lose ground in the states. The governments of New Hampshire in 1805, and of Vermont and Massachusetts in 1807, became for the first time in their history Democratic in every branch. In Congress, the Federalist minority was a negligible quantity. In consequence, it seemed hopeless to expect success for Federalist candidates. Timothy Pickering wrote from Washington in January: "The federalists here are in point of *numbers* so utterly impotent; and democracy governs in nearly all the States with such an overwhelming majority; nothing would be more remote from the contemplation of the federalists than to set up candidates of their own for President and Vice-President. They have only a choice of evils"⁴—to support one of the insurgent movements in the Republican party. Of these there were two. The regular administration nominations—Madison for president and George Clinton for vice-president—were made by "Bradley's Caucus", consisting of 89 out of the 130 Republicans in Congress, on January 23. Two days earlier the "Quids" in the Virginia legislature; John Randolph's

³ The following summary of the election of 1808 may be found useful:

State	Elec. Votes	Method of Choice	Date of Elec. (of State Elec. when Electors chosen by Legislature)	Madis- son	Pinck- ney	Clinton
N. H.	7	Legislature	Aug. 29		7	
Vt.	6	Legislature	Sept. 5	6		
Mass.	19	Legislature (not decided until Nov. 7)	Apr. 4—May 30		19	
R. I.	4	Legislature	Aug. 30		4	
Conn.	9	Legislature	Apr. 4		9	
N. Y.	19	Legislature	Apr. 26—May 7	13		6
N. J.	8	General ticket	Nov. 1–2	8		
Pa.	20	General ticket	Nov. 4	20		
Del.	3	Legislature	Oct. 3		3	
Md.	11	Districts	Nov. 7	9	2	
Va.	24	General ticket	Nov. 4	24		
N. C.	14	Districts	Nov. 7	11	3	
S. C.	10	Legislature	Dec. 6	10		
Ga.	6	Legislature		6		
Tenn.	5	Districts	Nov. 7	5		
Ky.	8	Districts	Nov. 14	7		
Ohio	3	Districts	Nov. 7	3		
	176			122	47	6

⁴ Pickering to C. W. Hare, January 16, 1808. Pickering Papers, XIV. 177.

insurgent sect of some two years' standing, nominated James Monroe for the presidential chair. George Clinton's candidacy, caused by the disappointed ambition of his clan for the regular presidential nomination, was announced in March,⁵ and speedily supported by a number of influential Republican newspapers.⁶ Indications soon appeared that the Clintonians were bidding for Federalist backing. Rumor had it that Clinton disapproved of Jefferson's Embargo;⁷ James Cheetham and, of all persons, the *ci-devant* *Citoyen Genêt*,⁸ vied with the Federalist editors in exposing French influence in the administration. Here was the Federalists' opportunity. Instead of going down to certain defeat with candidates of their own, why not join in supporting Clinton, who was thus endorsing their policies? Coalition with the Democrats was not unprecedented—it had already been effected in state elections in Pennsylvania, New York, and Rhode Island.

There was a certain amount of correspondence early in the year among leading Federalists in regard to the presidential nominations,⁹ but serious consideration of that topic was postponed until after the spring elections in Massachusetts and New York. These elections were in reality a part of the presidential election, for in New York it was already provided that the legislature would choose presidential electors, and in Massachusetts, as no method had yet been fixed, the decision rested with the legislature about to be chosen. Under those circumstances, it seems strange that the Federalists did not make their presidential nominations before the state elections

⁵ His letter of March 5 disavowing the Washington caucus is in the Philadelphia *United States Gazette*, March 8, 1808, and all leading Federalist newspapers, also in *Communications on the next Election . . . by a Citizen of New York* (n. p. 1808), p. 35, n. 2.

⁶ James Cheetham's *American Citizen*, the leading Democratic journal of New York City; his *Republican Watch-Tower*, the *Washington Expositor*, the *Albany Register*, and, for a time, the Philadelphia *Democratic Press*. The most formidable electioneering pamphlet for Clinton was *An Address to the People of the American States who choose Electors* (Washington, April, 1808).

⁷ The Boston *Columbian Centinel*, June 25, 1808. J. D. Hammond, *History of Political Parties in the State of New York*, I. 269, n. The *American Citizen* began to attack the Embargo in August.

⁸ Genêt's "Lucubrations" (as the *Washington Monitor* called them), in behalf of his father-in-law, appeared in the *Albany Register* over various pseudonyms. He was also the author of the pamphlet mentioned in note 5.

⁹ Pickering's letter, quoted above, discussed the merits of Madison, Clinton, and Monroe, and decided in favor of the latter. "Mr. Monroe is inferior in learning and discernment to Mr. Madison: but then he is a more practical man; and we think more upright than either of the candidates. Indeed we know of nothing to impeach his integrity. Considering his diplomatic career—a portion of it amid the hot-bed of corruption—Paris; his actual poverty is a proof of his honesty." A rare compliment for Timothy Pickering to pay to a "Jacobin", and an amusing comparison to his ferocious attack on Monroe in 1797. See also William Barton to Pickering, March 19, 1808. *Pickering Papers*, XXVIII. 245.

began. They probably wished to make a test of their strength, before deciding between separate candidates and a coalition with the insurgents.

The results of the early state elections were highly encouraging to the Federalists. In Massachusetts, owing to the injudicious nomination of Christopher Gore,¹⁰ they failed to capture the governorship, but secured what was far more important, a working majority in both houses of the legislature.¹¹ The New York Federalists failed to do so well, but managed to increase their delegation in the assembly from 21 to 45, which, out of a total number of 105,¹² would make a Clinton-Federalist alliance irresistible. These results were brought about mainly through the skilful use by Federalist leaders of a potent electioneering weapon furnished them by Jefferson—the Embargo. They were quick to see its possibilities for stirring up the people. “The Embargo will ‘touch their bone and their flesh’, when they must curse its authors”, wrote Timothy Pickering.¹³ The first gun of the Massachusetts, and incidentally of the presidential campaign, was Pickering’s violent attack on the administration’s policy in his letter to Governor Sullivan.¹⁴ It was printed in every Federalist newspaper in the country, and thousands of copies, in pamphlet form, were circulated throughout the state and the Union.¹⁵ Pickering’s letter was the means of “arousing the people from their lethargy”,¹⁶ of playing on the distress which commercial restriction caused a seafaring population, and shaking off the fatal apathy that

¹⁰ Christopher Gore’s nomination was distinctly the work of the Essex Junto. He was, as the Republicans did not fail to point out, the son of a refugee Tory, and his only public service so far had been in England as commissioner under the Jay treaty, and chargé des affaires. His vote in Boston fell 600 short of Caleb Strong’s in 1807.

¹¹ The votes on May 25 for speaker of the house and president of the senate were 252-221, and 19-17, in favor of the Federalist candidates.

¹² J. D. Hammond, *Political Parties in New York*, I. 261, 268.

¹³ To George Rose, March 13, 1808. Pickering Papers, XIV. 197.

¹⁴ *A Letter from the Hon. Timothy Pickering . . . Addressed to his Excellency James Sullivan* (Boston, March 9, 1808).

¹⁵ Christopher Gore to Rufus King, March 10, 1808. C. R. King, *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, V. 88. The Democrats asserted that no less than 25,000 copies of the Pickering *Letter* were distributed.

¹⁶ This phrase, as applied to the Embargo, is repeated, with variations, by Gore (letter cited), by Josiah Dwight of Northampton in a letter of March 16, 1808, to H. G. Otis, and by John Henry, the British spy, in his letter of March 10, 1808, to H. W. Ryland (Henry Adams, *United States*, IV. 245). “Curtius” in the Boston *Columbian Sentinel*, January 23-27, 1808, writes under the head, “The Embargo a Blessing”, that the Embargo will so redound to the advantage of the Federalists, that he is astonished at the opposition of Federalist editors to it. “The Embargo is our Panacea . . . It is the cure of all our evils”. Timothy Dwight, so late as December 21, 1808, hopes that the Embargo may “remain until it has thoroughly done its work”. Pickering Papers, XXVIII. 418.

had characterized the Federalist party in the last seven years. Federalist leaders rightly calculated that popular discontent with the "Terrapin Policy" would increase in geometrical ratio to its duration. The Massachusetts and New York elections turned the tide of "corruption so rapidly extending";¹⁷ might not the ebb tide of reaction prove strong enough to carry a Federalist candidate to the presidential chair?

With these considerations in their minds, the leaders now began in earnest the work of deciding on the moot question of the presidential nomination. The first move¹⁸ came from Philadelphia. Charles Willing Hare, a prominent Federalist of that city, one of its representatives in the Pennsylvania assembly, wrote Harrison Gray Otis on June 2, 1808:

We are desirous here to learn what steps you mean to adopt in Massachusetts, with regard to the election of President. Whether you determine to nominate a federalist, or to support General Clinton,¹⁹ it is equally necessary that we should hear from you. Our Electors are chosen in November by the people, in one ticket for the whole State. Hence the time has nearly arrived, at which in the event of its being determined to support a federal candidate, some previous arrangements should be made. Or if you and our friends generally are inclined to vote for Clinton it is right that we should be apprized of it, in order that we may prepare to yield an efficient support to that portion of the democrats, who advocate his election. As your Legislature is now federal and is in session it is generally expected here that the first movement will be with you. And your advice would have decisive influence with us.

Details of the action of Federalist leaders in Massachusetts, on receipt of Hare's letter, are preserved in two letters of Christopher Gore to Rufus King.²⁰ The Federalist legislative caucus at Boston appointed a Committee of Twenty,²¹ which in turn appointed a Com-

¹⁷ Pickering's complaint in 1804. H. Adams, *New England Federalism*, p. 352.

¹⁸ Gore says as much in his letter of June 16. King, *Rufus King*, V. 101. Hare's letter itself is among the Otis papers.

¹⁹ After April, no more is said in Federalist correspondence about supporting Monroe. It soon became evident that Monroe had no support outside of Virginia.

²⁰ Boston, June 8 and 16, 1808, printed in King, *Rufus King*, V. 100-102.

²¹ Gore's letter says the Committee of 20 "were chosen by the Federalists consisting of nearly three hundred". This is undoubtedly the legislative caucus, as (1) the legislative caucus was organized, as indicated by a letter of June 1 from James Lloyd to "Hon'ble Mr. Otis, Chairman of Federal meeting of the members of the legislature", accepting the caucus nomination for senator; (2) the voters in house and senate for Lloyd, as Adams's successor, plus the nine members of the council, amount to almost 300; (3) all the members of the committee except Cabot were then members of the legislature, and Cabot was in the council; (4) no "Grand Federal Caucus" (mass-meeting)—the only other body by which the committee could have been chosen—is advertised in Boston papers for June 4-8, although one is advertised for April 3, and another for May 10, in the *N. E. Palladium*.

mittee of Correspondence, "to correspond with the Federalists in other states on the business of the next Election of President and V. President",²² and "for the purpose ofconcerting our arrangements, and ascertaining, as far as could be done, the Weight of the Federalists in the next Election". The committee consisted of George Cabot, Harrison Gray Otis, president of the senate, Christopher Gore, who had been elected to the house after his defeat for the governorship, Timothy Bigelow, speaker of the house, and James Lloyd, a Boston merchant who had just been chosen Adams's successor in the United States Senate. All were Boston men, and all, except Otis, were of the Essex Junto persuasion, recognizing Pickering as their leader.²³ The committee held a meeting on June 10, when "after some Conversation, it was deemed advisable to propose a meeting of Federalists, from as many States, as could be seasonably notified, at New York the last of this, or the Beginning of the next month".²⁴

Here, then, is the original proposition²⁵ for the original nominating convention.²⁶ The idea was revolutionary in party machinery, both from a Federalist and a national point of view. By 1808 the Republican party had brought the convention system of nomination to a high degree of development in the states,²⁷ but this movement was regarded by the Federalist party with mingled suspicion and contempt. Ever since the pernicious activities of the Jacobin clubs—the "self-created societies" of 1793–1794—every type of extra-legal machinery was anathema to Federalists, especially to the New England section of the party. Nominations by conventions of delegates were illegal, revolutionary, despotic. The people were bartering away their franchise in promising to support the candidates of a set of delegates.²⁸ In the eyes of most Federalists in

²² Compare this indirect method of election with similar methods of appointing committees of correspondence in New York in 1789. G. D. Luetscher, *Early Political Machinery in the United States*, p. 115.

²³ I take it that the Essex Junto, from 1800 to 1815, should be defined as the Massachusetts Federalist leaders who opposed John Adams in 1800, who condoned the Chesapeake outrage, and who squinted at secession in 1814.

²⁴ Gore's letter of June 16 to Rufus King. King, *Rufus King*, V. 101.

²⁵ So far as appears from the available sources. The idea was probably discussed by H. G. Otis with New York and Philadelphia politicians on a visit he made to those cities in May, 1808.

²⁶ Note Hare's use of the term convention in his letter of June 19 to Otis, below.

²⁷ Luetscher, *Political Machinery*, chs. III–IV.

²⁸ Excellent examples of this attitude are given in G. D. Luetscher, pp. 69–72, 105, 141–143. See also a leading article, "Freedom of Election", in the *Columbian Sentinel*, August 3, 1808. Curiously enough, the Federalists held one of the first conventions that nominated candidates for office (in Pennsylvania, 1788). J. S. Walton, *AM. HIST. REV.*, II. 264.

1808, the only proper methods of nomination were by mass-meetings, or by personal friends of the candidate.²⁹ Hence, when as frequently happened, the leaders found the use of some proscribed method of nomination a political necessity, the fact was carefully concealed from the body of the voters. This was the case with the convention of 1808; the modern student will search the Federalist press in vain for the slightest hint of its existence. Our knowledge of it is derived exclusively from the correspondence of the Federalist leaders, and from impudent disclosures by Republican editors, who naturally took great pleasure in lifting the veil of secrecy.

The work of securing a national representation in the convention was carried on by personal communications from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The Massachusetts Committee of Correspondence met on June 10, Christopher Gore informs us,

and immediately sent Livermore³⁰ to N. Hampshire, and we are flatter'd with the Belief that the Electors of that State will be federal. . . . Bigelow sets off on Monday for Vermont to consult and arrange with the Feds of that State, on their sending some person or persons to the meeting in N. York; and to attain the best Data for forming an opinion as to the Result of their Election. Otis is now at R. Island.³¹

These movements were all duly reported by the opposition press.³²

²⁹ Pennsylvania is an exception to this statement. Here the Federalists in 1808 are using the county convention to nominate county officers, members of Congress, members of the state assembly, to confirm the nomination of governor, and issue election addresses. (*E. g.*, in Franklin, Lancaster, and Westmoreland counties; *Relf's Philadelphia Gazette*, August 23, September 7 and 10, 1808.) The Pennsylvania Federalists reserved their criticisms for the legislative caucus. J. S. Walton, *AM. HIST. REV.*, II. 175.

³⁰ Probably Edward St. Loe Livermore (1762-1832), originally a New Hampshire man, member of Congress from the Essex north district, 1807-1811.

³¹ To Rufus King, June 16. King, *Rufus King*, V. 101.

³² The Amherst (N. H.) *Farmers' Cabinet* of August 23, 1808, states that "Delegates from the Essex Junto met the Federal representatives of the State in the late session at Concord" (which ended June 14) and drew up a slate of presidential electors, which was afterwards published (in the Portsmouth *Oracle*, September 24) as coming directly from the people. This charge is probably true, as the electoral ticket made a premature appearance in the Boston *Columbian Centinel* on June 25, much to the surprise of the New Hampshire Federalists (Keene, *New Hampshire Sentinel*, July 16). "A Traveller" notifies the Boston *Democrat* of July 6 that the Essex Junto's "agents may be found in every state of the union, disseminating falsehoods. If you travel northward into Vermont . . . you may hear of an hon. sp r [Bigelow] perambulating those parts, *perhaps* for the *laudable* and *patriotic* purpose of assisting to enforce the *Embargo laws* on Lake Champlain!!! If you travel southward, you may find the son of an old *refugee* tory [Lloyd or Gore] whose father's life was '*justly devoted to the cord*', together with hon. senators, closeted with Bond, their majesty's consul." The Boston *Independent Chronicle* of June 16 states, "Caution—beware of Counterfeits!! The citizens of Rhode-Island are cautioned against the tricks and devices of *two federal missionaries*, well and truly paid by the Essex Junto here, to propagate all kinds of falsehoods, etc., to answer electioneering purposes for the choice of Electors."

On the day following the committee meeting Otis wrote Hare in Philadelphia³³ and received from him an answer as follows, dated June 19.

I received yours of the 11th on the 16. I immediately took measures for convening a few of our most active firm and discreet friends. A Meeting of about a dozen was held yesterday—at which your objects and reasoning were stated—and so far as regards the propriety of the proposed convention, immediately and without hesitation acquiesced in. A Committee consisting of Messrs Fitzsimons R Waln Latimer Morgan³⁴ and myself, were appointed to correspond with you—and in obedience to your suggestion to “organise for the South.” We shall immediately write to some of our friends in Maryland and Delaware, and after having heard from them I shall again address you. It has appeared to us, that the second Monday in August would be a convenient time for assembling. The State of our foreign relations will then have been better ascertained, and some further Manifestations of public feeling will probably have been made. At the same time it will not be too late for a full correspondence with the Southern Federalists.

Subsequent letters from Hare to Otis inform us that a delegate was sent to Delaware, but that James A. Bayard, the Federalist “boss” of that state, threw “cold water upon the idea of holding a Meeting, and in his letters here has rather endeavored to persuade us to abandon the project”.³⁵ Through Robert Goodloe Harper the co-operation of the Maryland Federalists was secured. South Carolina was communicated with through the Charleston “junto”, as John Rutledge jocosely called a Federalist committee in that city.³⁶ The New York Federalists were informed of the convention project through Gore’s letters to Rufus King; and Judge Egbert Benson, after a personal interview with the Massachusetts committee,³⁷ was given the task of attending to Connecticut and New Jersey. Benson reported to Otis from New York on July 13 as follows:

On my return through Connecticut I saw Messrs. Goodrich and Daggett;³⁸ and after being at Home a day or two I determined to go to

³³ Unfortunately there are no copies of Otis’s own letters of this year preserved in the Otis papers, and the writer has not succeeded in recovering any of the originals.

³⁴ Thomas Fitzsimons (1741–1811), Robert Waln, George Latimer, and Benjamin R. Morgan, all active Philadelphia Federalists. These four were members of the “Federal Committee of Correspondence of the City and County of Philadelphia”, appointed at a mass-meeting on March 7. *U. S. Gazette*, March 8; *Relf’s Philadelphia Gazette*, June 25.

³⁵ Hare to Otis, July 12, 1808.

³⁶ Rutledge to Otis, September 18, 1808. This was the younger John Rutledge, member of Congress, 1797–1803. He and Henry William De Saussure, the future chancellor, were members of the “junto”.

³⁷ Duly reported in the Democratic press of New York. (*Letters of Marcus and Philo-Cato*, new ed., 1810, p. 70.)

³⁸ Chauncey Goodrich (1759–1815), then senator from Connecticut, and Daniel Daggett (1764–1851), a member of the state legislature.

New Jersey, where I saw Messrs. Ogden and Stockton;³⁹ and to Philadelphia, where I saw Messrs. Rawle and Hopkinson.⁴⁰ To all these several Gentlemen I mentioned how anxious and zealous You were in Boston as to the ensuing Presidential Election, and Your Intention to convene a number of our Friends from other States to confer and come to some general Understanding on the following Points, Whether it shall be advisable for Us to have federal Candidates for President and Vice President? If so, Who shall they be? If not, then, Shall the federal Electors, wherever they may happen to be chosen, vote for Clinton or for Madison?, and lastly, Shall the Removal of the Seat of Government, back to Philadelphia, be attempted?⁴¹—that my mission to them was to suggest that they should instantly associate to themselves such Persons as should think proper to form a Committee of Correspondence through You with our friends in Boston, and You doubtless will hear from them soon. The Gentlemen in Philadelphia will send some Person on the like Errand to Delaware.

No effort seems to have been made to get into communication with the North Carolina Federalists, who proved strong enough to give Pinckney three electoral votes, or with Virginia, where Federalism still prevailed along the Potomac and the Shenandoah.⁴² The western states, where the party still existed in a moribund state, were also neglected, although some attempt was made to communicate to

³⁹ Aaron Ogden (d. 1829) and Richard Stockton, jr. (1764–1828).

⁴⁰ William Rawle (1759–1836) and Joseph Hopkinson (1770–1842).

⁴¹ A project of this sort was moved in the House of Representatives in February, 1808, the object being to remove the Capitol from "Virginia Influence". Hare writes Otis, July 12, "In Maryland we are informed great fear and anxiety prevail relative to the removal of the seat of Government, and on this account in that State, our friends are warmly desirous to have a Southern President." With representatives from Maryland and South Carolina present, the project could hardly have been brought up in the convention.

⁴² A letter of William R. Davie, the Federalist leader of North Carolina, written August 15, 1808, shows him to have been completely out of touch with the rest of the party. *James Sprunt Historical Monographs*, no. 7, p. 68. Augusta County, in the upper valley of Virginia, was a nest of Federalists. At Staunton, the county-seat, a Federalist mass-meeting on September 17 appointed a committee which drew up a strong election address, made an independent nomination of Pinckney and King, and formed an electoral ticket by correspondence with Federalists in other counties. This ticket was communicated to the Federalist newspapers of Richmond, which failed to publish it, as the Federalists of that place had decided, as the only means of making their vote count, to support the Monroe electoral ticket. This brought out an acrimonious address from the Staunton committee, stating that they wished nothing to do with Monroe, after his correspondence with Jefferson, "besides our objection, on principle, to all temporising". N. Y. *Evening Post*, October 4, November 5, 1808; C. H. Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia*, pp. 87–90. It was here that, in 1812, the convention was held which refused to endorse DeWitt Clinton, and nominated independently Rufus King and General Davie (E. Stanwood, *History of the Presidency*, p. 102). A strong Pinckney election pamphlet was written by a Virginian (J. T. Danvers, *Picture of a Republican Magistrate*, N. Y., 1808).

them the nominations.⁴³ Federalism was as much out of place beyond the Alleghanies as powdered hair and silk stockings. In Georgia, the Federalist party had been dead since 1800.⁴⁴

In the third week of August⁴⁵ this embryo national convention met in New York. Its existence even could not be guessed from Federalist journals, but the coming together of so many noted Federalists did not escape the vigilant eyes of the Democratic press.⁴⁶ Where the sessions were held can only be a matter of conjecture. Representatives were present from eight states: New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and South Carolina.⁴⁷ Rhode Island was unable to send a delegate, because no one could be spared from the state campaign that was then going on.⁴⁸ Delaware was unrepresented on account of Bayard's opposition to the meeting; New Jersey for unexplained reasons. The number and the personnel of the members is also largely a matter of conjecture; but it is certain that Massachusetts sent three members of the central committee, Otis, Gore, and Lloyd;⁴⁹ Thomas Fitzsimons and Hare⁵⁰ were among

⁴³ "With the States of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee we have no means of Communication. We have been informed, that a few Votes may be secured in those States by the Attention of Influential Characters in the State of South Carolina. This Suggestion is respectfully submitted to the Consideration of our Friends in Charleston—Urging and entreating them to lose no Time in adopting every proper and effectual Measure for communicating with those States, and to spare no Exertions to secure to our Candidates at least a Portion of the Votes of those States. We also rely with Confidence on your Attention to our Friends in North Carolina—their Distance prevents any safe and timely Correspondence with them on our Part." New York Federalist Committee to Charleston Federalist Committee, September, 1808. Otis MSS.

⁴⁴ U. B. Phillips, *Report of the American Historical Association*, 1901, II. 92.

⁴⁵ The third Monday in August, the 15th, was the date agreed upon beforehand, but it is probable that the first session was not held until the latter part of the week, as Cabot is still writing to Otis his final arguments for Clinton on the 14th, and no comments on the meeting appear in newspapers before the 20th (N. Y. *Public Advertiser*).

⁴⁶ "On Friday last, a detachment from the Essex Junto passed through Hartford, on their way to New-York, there, by agreement, to meet the other 'choice spirits', for the purpose of appointing a KING to rule over us." Boston *Independent Chronicle*, August 22. "Federal Delegates from the eastern and southern states have arrived in this city. It is said that the long protracted COMPROMISE is about to take place, in order to give a 'successor' to Mr. Jefferson!" *Ibid.*, quoting the N. Y. *Public Advertiser*.

⁴⁷ "The States of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland were severally represented at those Deliberations, as was likewise the State of South Carolina by our respected Friend John Rutledge, Esquire of your City." New York Committee to Charleston Committee, September, 1808. Otis MSS.

⁴⁸ George Cabot to Otis, August 14, 1808.

⁴⁹ George Cabot to Timothy Pickering, August 10, 1808. H. C. Lodge, *George Cabot*, p. 397.

⁵⁰ Fitzsimons to Otis, October 4, 1808. "When we separated at New York."

the Pennsylvania delegation; Josiah Dunham⁵¹ came from Vermont; and John Rutledge, from South Carolina.⁵² The total number could not have been more than twenty-five or thirty. The great handicap to a wider representation was undoubtedly the expense and time necessary at that period for a journey to New York—Rutledge's presence was due to the fact that he always spent his summers in Newport. Of the method of choosing delegates we have no direct evidence, but there can be no doubt that they were selected by the exclusive committees formed in the different states as indicated by Hare's and Benson's letters.

In composition, as in objects, the resemblance of the 1808 convention to that of 1812 is striking. The latter was attended by over seventy delegates, but the sectional representation was the same as in 1808. Delegates were present from the three northern states which failed to take part in 1808, but in both conventions the West was unrepresented, and the South only by Maryland and South Carolina. In neither was any attempt made to limit the size of the delegations.⁵³ Both were representative only of the party leaders,⁵⁴ and both were intended to be kept secret from the mass of voters.

Of the proceedings of the 1808 convention, we know no more than the bare result, but the whole question between supporting Clinton and making separate nominations was so thoroughly threshed out in the correspondence preceding the convention, that we may fairly assume the line of argument that led to the rejection of the project of coalition.⁵⁵ The question was simply one of

⁵¹ Cabot to Otis, August 14, "Mr. Bigelow has a letter from Mr. Dunham on his way to meet you" (Otis was already in New York). Josiah Dunham was a Vermont Federalist, who afterward tried to get into the Hartford Convention, but was refused admittance on account of some irregularity about his credentials.

⁵² Besides the above, we may reasonably assume the presence of R. G. Harper from Maryland, and of the New York Federalists who afterward appeared as the central committee; namely, Jacob Radcliff, J. Ogden Hoffman, Cadwalader D. Colden, and Samuel Jones, jr. We have the very untrustworthy authority of "Thraso" in Duane's *Aurora* of August 31, that Gouverneur Morris acted as chairman.

⁵³ J. S. Murdock, in *AM. HIST. REV.*, I. 682; B. C. Steiner, *James McHenry*, pp. 583-586.

⁵⁴ The Massachusetts delegation in 1808, and a few of the others, were representatives of the majorities in the state legislatures, but judging from the Massachusetts methods, they must have passed through as many successive winnowings as a French Senator of the Consulate. Mr. Murdock's inference that the New York delegates to the 1812 convention were elected by a state convention (*AM. HIST. REV.*, I. 682), is not justified by the authorities to which he refers, and the proceedings of the state convention (at Albany, September 17-18) make no reference to such a delegation. *N. Y. Evening Post*, September 25, 1812.

⁵⁵ Richard Hildreth, who heard of the convention either from Republican newspapers or Federalist tradition, is probably the originator of a statement

expediency. Were the Federalists strong enough to elect their own candidates? If not, would Clinton bring the party enough votes to ensure victory? Would the election of Clinton benefit the Federalists in any case? These are the questions the pro and con of which were discussed down to the eve of the convention, and there is no reason to suppose that the final decision was reached from any different data. The Federalist correspondence is again our only source, for the Federalist press kept silence on this as on other matters connected with the nomination.⁵⁶

The chief support of the Clinton coalition came from Boston. Otis, whose eloquence, it is said, turned the balance in favor of DeWitt Clinton in the Federalist convention of 1812,⁵⁷ was equally strong in favor of George Clinton in 1808. Another powerful advocate of coalition was George Cabot. Cabot since 1804 had occupied in his party a position similar to that of Jefferson in the Republican party after 1808. From Brookline, as from Monticello, the active party leaders received letters that spoke with authority. Easily the intellectual leader of his party since the death of Hamilton, George Cabot in his study at Brookline saw what no other Federalist had the wisdom to see, that a page of democratic evolution had been turned, and the days of Federalist ascendancy had passed never to return. He writes Otis,⁵⁸ already on his way to New York, that it is useless to attempt the election of a Federalist president—the Democrats are in a majority, and:

I find from Dr. M⁵⁹ that Mr. R and other respectable Federalists have often declared their doubts of the utility of a Federal President in the

(*United States*, VI. 94), since repeated and enlarged upon, that the proposed coalition failed because DeWitt Clinton did not reply satisfactorily to overtures of the Federalists. (J. B. McMaster, *United States*, III. 317; H. Adams, *United States*, IV. 284; DeA. S. Alexander, *Political History of New York*, I. 166.) Such was the rumor stated by the *Aurora*, August 31, N. Y. *Public Advertiser*, August 29, *Washington Monitor*, September 5, 1808. There is no evidence among existing correspondence that overtures of any sort to DeWitt Clinton were even contemplated; there is every evidence that the question was decided on entirely different grounds. In 1812, however, definite assurances were received from DeWitt Clinton before the convention of that year met. King, *Rufus King*, V. 264-271. No reference to the Federalists is made in the letters of 1808 between George and DeWitt Clinton that have been preserved (Library of Columbia University).

⁵⁶ I have noticed but one discussion, from the Federalist point of view, of the nomination question in a Federalist newspaper (*New York Review*, quoted in the *Boston Gazette*, July 4 and 7). The Boston Federalist newspapers in June and July published a number of articles commending the character of George Clinton—thus reflecting the views of their leaders—but they do not venture to discuss the question of the nominations.

⁵⁷ William Sullivan, *Public Men of the Revolution*, pp. 350-351, n.

⁵⁸ Cabot to Otis, two letters of August 14, 1808.

⁵⁹ Probably Dr. J. M. Mason of New York.

shameful state to which our affairs have been brought⁶⁰—but there is a great difference of opinion between them and me on the final effect of Jeffn and Madn continuing at the head 4 years more. they believe the evils that wou'd be produced by protracting the period of their mal-administration wou'd make madmen wise; we think it wou'd make wise men mad. to me it seems incredible that the *many* will ever from a sense of their own abuse of power *voluntarily* transfer it to those over whom they have been exercising it. if there are sufferings they will chiefly be ours, or if universal they whose vice and folly produce them will never ascribe those sufferings to their own misconduct. If however Discontent demands a change it will be made in favor of the most turbulent who in such times are exclusively heard. I think the quietude of the Community under the Embargo laws with the extraordinary Rescripts that followed, furnishes the amplest proof of Mr. Jefferson's absolute power. . . . The people will adhere to those who are the instruments of their passions, and will shun those who wou'd controul them.

Cabot believed that Clinton would reverse the policy of Jefferson, and that his election should be sought as the greatest attainable good. The correspondence indicates, however, that the decisive element in the discussion was the practical question, whether Clinton could carry Pennsylvania. Down to the middle of July it seemed probable that he could. Early in 1808 the alliance between the Federalists and Constitutional (conservative) Republicans of Pennsylvania, which had supported the administrations of McKean, broke up. The Constitutionalists, eager to anticipate the Conventionalists (radicals), in the favor of the administration, held a caucus at Lancaster, early in March, nominated Spayd for governor, and an electoral ticket pledged to vote for Madison. Shortly afterwards the Conventionalists, headed by Duane and Leib, called a mixed legislative caucus, nominated Simon Snyder for governor, and a second Republican electoral ticket—unpledged, but apparently intended to vote for Clinton.⁶¹ As there seemed to be some doubt about this, a convention of Snyderite delegates from the towns of Northumberland County held on June 28, and controlled by two strong Clinton Democrats, Samuel Maclay and William Montgomery, tried to force the hand of their party by resolving to support the Conventionalist electoral ticket, on the understanding

⁶⁰ Cf. James A. Bayard to Hamilton, April 25, 1802. "Let us not be too impatient, and our adversaries will soon demonstrate to the world the soundness of our doctrines, and the imbecility and folly of their own. Without any exertion upon our part, in the course of two or three years they will render every honest man in the country our proselyte." (Hamilton's *Works*, 1851 ed., VI. 544.) Fisher Ames writes in 1801: "The feds maintain twenty opinions, the best of which is quite enough to ruin any party. 'Let the people run themselves out of breath—all will come right. There is no occasion for us to do anything!'" J. H. Morison, *Jeremiah Smith*, p. 231.

⁶¹ W. M. Meigs, "Pennsylvania Politics early in this Century", in *Pa. Mag.*, XVII. 462-490; Stanwood, *History of the Presidency*, p. 92.

that its vote would be cast for Clinton.⁶² This looked as if Clinton could carry Pennsylvania with the aid of the Federalists, and the Philadelphia Federalists were almost converted to the coalition,⁶³ when the real leaders of the Conventionalist party, Duane and Leib, came out for Madison in an unmistakable manner. In an *Address to the Citizens of Pennsylvania*,⁶⁴ they rebuked the Democrats of Northumberland County for their endorsement of Clinton, asserted that the Lancaster electoral ticket would vote for Madison, and eventually patched up a truce with the Conservative wing of their party.⁶⁵ By the time that the Federalist convention met in New York, Democratic harmony in Pennsylvania was complete, and it was obvious that Clinton's independent strength outside New York was nil.

That Clinton could carry New York state, with Federalist aid, was certain. Were, however, nineteen electoral votes worth the abandonment of principle that a coalition with Clinton would imply? One of the traditional principles of the Federalist party was that only within its ranks could be found men competent to govern the country. The nomination of Clinton would be a frank admission to the contrary. Judge Theodore Sedgwick wrote on this aspect of the question to Otis on June 6:

It is of infinite importance that the leading federalists should conduct in such manner as to convince the publick that they are actuated by principle. This, I imagine, can hardly be the case unless they act by themselves, and keep themselves separate from the different parties into which their adversaries are divided. . . . I cannot endure the humiliating idea that those who alone from education, fortune, character and principle are entitled to command should voluntarily arrange themselves under the banners of a party in all respects inferior, and in many odious, to them.

It was distance as well as expediency that lent enchantment to the view of an alliance with Clinton. The New York Federalists would have none of him. "We have condescended twice to tamper with Democratic Candidates",⁶⁶ writes Abraham Van Vechten to

⁶² The resolutions are printed in the Boston *Columbian Centinel*, July 20, 1808 (quoted from *U. S. Gazette*).

⁶³ Hare to Otis, July 12, 1808.

⁶⁴ *Address of the State Committee of Correspondence to the Citizens of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1808); also in the *Aurora*, August 8. Duane, Leib, and Leiper were members of this committee, which was appointed by the mixed caucus at Lancaster. The Federalists charged that this move was caused by the army appointment of Duane early in July, but the *Aurora* was strongly Madisonian some months previous. See also Duane's letters to Madison and Jefferson, in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, second series, XX. 308-311.

⁶⁵ In the meetings at the Rising Sun Tavern, August 13 and 24. Meigs, p. 478

⁶⁶ Burr and Lewis.

Otis,⁶⁷ "and in both instances have been subjected to severe self-reproach. Our experimental knowledge of the Clintonian System is a powerful Antidote against affording it any facility here." He and his friends saw nothing to choose between George Clinton and James Madison.

For the reasons given, then—the weakness of Clinton, and the fact that his nomination, while helping the Federalists little or none, would injure their party character—the New York convention decided to place Federalist candidates in nomination. Their decision was announced to the Charleston Federalists in the following words:

After several Meetings, and after the most mature and dispassionate Consideration of the Subject, we formed a conclusive opinion, as to the Line of Conduct most proper for the Federal Party to observe. It was decided to be our Correct and dignified Policy to afford neither Aid nor Countenance, direct or indirect, to any of our political opponents, but, holding ourselves perfectly distinct, to nominate Federal Characters for the offices of President and Vice President, and to support them, with our uniform, zealous, and vigorous exertions. . . . Having decided on the Measure, no difference of opinion could exist as to the Selection of Candidates, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney for the office of President, and Rufus King for the office of Vice President, became without the least Hesitation our Choice.⁶⁸

This was the same ticket as in 1804. The choice of Pinckney was due to his high character and reputation of patriotism, to the hope of capturing his native state, and to the wish of avoiding the stigma of sectionalism, of which political parties in the United States have always been remarkably sensitive. He was distinctly the most "available" candidate.⁶⁹

The above letter shows conclusively that the convention carried out the purpose for which it was summoned, and made a definite nomination of president and vice-president. This was not done in 1812. The convention of that year broke up after registering a simple *viva* in favor of DeWitt Clinton, leaving the real decision

⁶⁷ July 21, 1808. Van Vechten was a leader of the Federalists in the assembly; see index to DeA. S. Alexander, *Political History of New York*.

⁶⁸ Letter of New York Federalist Committee of Correspondence (which was evidently appointed by the convention to a position corresponding to the modern Committee on Notifications), to the Charleston Federalist committee, September, 1808. Manuscript copy enclosed in letter of October 9 from the New York committee to the Boston committee.

⁶⁹ D. Ramsay, *History of South Carolina*, II. 442. The only indication of any opposition to Pinckney's nomination, when once Clinton was ruled out, is a statement of Christopher Gore, in his letter of June 16 to Rufus King, to the effect that "Our Gentlemen are anxious to support a federal candidate, and that from New York, instead of from S. Carolina; provided there is the least probability of Success." King, *Rufus King*, V. 101.

to a committee that was to sit in Philadelphia and continue the correspondence.⁷⁰

Having summoned and carried on the convention in secret, it was necessary to be extremely discreet in announcing its nomination. The original plan for the public nomination, and the reasons for making an eleventh-hour change, are given in the following letter of October 4, from Thomas Fitzsimons of Philadelphia to Gore, Otis, and Lloyd, the Massachusetts delegation:

When we seperated at New York, it was understood, that the result of our Conference, should not be made public, until, the event of the Election in Pennsylva.⁷¹ should be known, and until the Conferees⁷² from that State, should deem a publication of it proper.

Circumstances have since Occurred, which in their oppinion rendered any publication of that Kind Inexpedient, and led them to conclude that the safer Course, would be to leave our friends in each state to Announce the Candidates to their fellow Citizens, at such time, and in such way as they should themselves think best. We were Led to this conclusion, from having observed something like a Jealousy, in our friends at having a Nomination so Important decided on by so small a No. as we were, and without any Special authority for the purpose, for altho there appears to be no division of sentiment thr'out the state, as to the Candidates, yet it was deemed most prudent that it should appear rather the result of General sentiment than as the Choice of a few to bind their party. to this effect, I wrote our friends at New York, still considering ourselves bound to conform to what they and our Eastern friends should recommend. the Gent at New York appear to think as we do—and that you may be consulted, I send this unsealed to them.

Further explanation is given in a letter of the Philadelphia committee, to that of New York, quoted in a letter of the latter to the Massachusetts committee:

⁷⁰ Robert G. Harper, one of the delegates in 1812, wrote September 25 of that year, "The meeting resolved not to recommend the support of Mr. Clinton. It was thought best to take a course somewhat different. they resolved that it appeared impracticable to elect and was, therefore, inexpedient to propose, a federal Candidate; and that it should be recommended to the federalists throughout the United States, to exert themselves in the approaching Election of Electors, to procure the choice of such persons, as will be most likely to effect by their votes a change in the present course of public Measures, They then appointed a Committee, to collect and disseminate information on the Subject. The Committee sits in Philadelphia. . . . We do not stand committed to Mr. Clinton. He and his friends must therefore do all in their power to convince us, that he deserves the preference, in other words, that we may expect from him a different course of measures, or else we may drop them and try the effect of submitting four years longer to Madison, in hopes of a complete cure in that time. We may even bring forward a federal Candidate, should any thing occur to warrant the attempt." B. C. Steiner, *James McHenry*, pp. 585-586, confirmed by a letter of October 22, 1812, from another delegate, George Tibbitts, to H. G. Otis. It must be remembered that the account of the 1812 convention, in William Sullivan's *Public Men of the Revolution*, p. 350, was written many years later from oral tradition.

⁷¹ The state election, in October.

⁷² Meaning probably the Philadelphia committee which had been formed in June.

We were influenced to this determination by a very general disapprobation expressed by our friends of the Caucus at Washington and what we experienced in our State canvass. Considerate people are convinced that measures must be digested by the few, nevertheless among the mass each is desirous that he should be one of the number. It was therefore judged most advisable that our friends in each State should set on foot their canvass in the way they should deem most eligible.⁷³

The frankness of these letters makes comment almost superfluous—but the writer cannot help pointing out how the secret methods of the Federalists are beginning to react upon themselves. When we recall the method by which the Philadelphia committee (which undoubtedly chose the delegates to New York) was formed, by convening “about a dozen” of “our active, firm, and discreet friends”, the “Jealousy” of the outsiders is not surprising.

After quoting the above letter, the New York committee continues:

In consequence of this we have no expectation of any public nomination in Philadelphia and considering it important to be made without delay, we think that Massachusetts is not only entitled to originate the measure, but that coming from that quarter it would produce the greatest sensibility and interest in its favor, particularly in this State. We therefore submit to the consideration of our friends in your State the propriety of immediately proceeding to make the nomination in the manner which shall appear to them the most advantageous and impressive. In this State it will instantly be repeated and supported as far as we are able, and we have no doubt it will be followed by our political friends in every other State. We are satisfied it would not produce so good an effect to commence this business here and there are also local considerations which induce us not to wish to originate the nomination. We can give no certain assurance of supporting it by the vote of this State and if we were to begin this measure it might excite irritation and increase the difficulty of obtaining the aid of either section of the opposite party among us, on which our hopes as to this State at present depend. The latter consideration with us is important and we flatter ourselves you will unite in the opinion that it is most expedient for Massachusetts to begin the nomination, the success of which alone, we think can save our Country from disastrous events.

The Massachusetts committee apparently accepted the responsibility thus thrust upon them. In the *New England Palladium* and the *Repertory* of October 18 appears the formal announcement:

We have the satisfaction to learn, from information collected from every part of the Union, that one common sentiment prevails among the Federalists, with respect to Candidates for the two first offices in the National Government, and that the men selected by the approving voice

⁷³ “To the Honble Harrison G. Otis Esquire and the Gentlemen of the Federal Committee in Boston”, October 9, 1808. Signed “Jacob Radclif

Jos: Ogden Hoffman
Cadwalader D. Colden
S. Jones Junr.”

of the whole *American party*, to preserve the Union, and to prevent a calamitous war, are for President, the Hon. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, of South Carolina, for Vice President, the Hon. Rufus King, of New York. In *Massachusetts* a formal nomination of these great patriots has been delayed for the sole purpose of collecting the sentiments of the great body of Federalists—the TRUE AMERICANS⁷⁴ in other States. It being now ascertained, that among these there exists but one opinion; Massachusetts will obey the dictates of her own inclination, while she conforms to the wishes of her sister States, in supporting the above Candidates; and our friends in these States may rest assured, that the characters of the men and the dangers of the country will ensure unanimity without the aid of any Caucus, or other preliminary.

This deceptive statement was the official announcement of the presidential nomination—two or three weeks only before the choice of electors. The nomination was already generally known, however. On October 12 the New York *Evening Post*, impatient perhaps at the delay, announced it as coming from “several respectable sources”, and the Charleston *Courier* had made it known at least a month before.⁷⁵ It had been noted by the principal Republican newspapers,⁷⁶ but was not copied into Federalist journals until after the publication by the *Evening Post* and the Boston papers.

A description of the campaign of 1808 is beyond the scope of this article. Until the October state elections in New Jersey and Pennsylvania went against them, the Federalists were sanguine of success, but after that their only hope was a forlorn one—of converting the hostile majority in the New York legislature, and of carrying South Carolina. In the latter state the Federalists gave Charles Pinckney the hardest struggle of his political career,⁷⁷ but the Re-

⁷⁴ Robert Troup writes Rufus King, April 11, 1807, “Would not this be a favorable occasion for our party to assume a popular and significant name, free from the hobgoblins attached by many to Federalism?” (*King, Rufus King*, V. 31.) In the election of 1808, the term “Federalist” or even “Federal Republican” was seldom attached to a ticket. Combinations of the terms True American, Anti-Embargo, Free Trade, Washingtonian, Anti-Caucus, were generally used.

⁷⁵ As early as August 19 the *Courier* announces that “General Pinckney will be supported . . . by the *Washington Republicans*, and many moderate Democrats to the Northward and Eastward”. On September 8, “Our worthy fellow citizen and enlightened patriot, Gen. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, has been nominated, in several of the Northern papers”; October 3, “We are authorized to say that . . . Gen. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of this state will be supported by the Federal Republicans throughout the several States” (written probably after receipt of the letter from the New York committee).

⁷⁶ E. g., Boston *Independent Chronicle*, September 12; *National Intelligencer*, September 14. John Adams knew of Pinckney’s nomination on September 27. *Correspondence between John Adams and William Cunningham*, p. 28.

⁷⁷ Charles Pinckney to Madison, October 12, 1808; to Jefferson, October 23, 1808. Madison and Jefferson MSS., Library of Congress.

publicans secured an overwhelming majority in the legislature, which chose electors. Vermont and Maryland also disappointed the Federalists, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney secured only 47 electoral votes to Madison's 122. This was a notable increase over the fourteen votes of 1804; it began a brief Federalist Renaissance which lasted until 1815.

The student of this period cannot fail to be impressed by the subordinate rôle which Pinckney's name played in the campaign, even in the last three weeks of it, after his nomination was formally announced. Many of the leading Federalist journals, including the Boston *Columbian Centinel*, never even published the nomination. The casual reader of these newspapers would scarcely know whom the Federalists had chosen for their leader, were it not for the frequent contrast of Pinckney's oft-quoted words, "Millions for defense, and not one cent for tribute", with Madison's "France wants money and must have it". The Republican party, on the contrary, made the record and character of Madison one of their leading issues. This extraordinary neglect of their candidate is probably due to the fact that the Federalists when nominating Pinckney at New York did not altogether give up the idea of swinging over their electoral votes at the eleventh hour if George Clinton developed any unexpected strength. Otis, apparently, threatened to bolt the convention's nomination within two weeks after it was made. Hare writes him, September 6, reiterating the arguments against supporting Clinton, and urging him "not to set things afloat, *unless you can certainly elect Clinton*". An attempt was made by Theophilus Parsons to seduce the Connecticut legislature into the same course.⁷⁸ In Rhode Island, no public announcement of Pinckney's nomination was made;⁷⁹ it was urged in favor of the members of the Federalist electoral ticket that they were "not pledged to vote for any candidate. Those who advocate their election confide it to their Wisdom, and integrity."⁸⁰ The significance of the Rhode Islanders' move is explained by a letter of James B. Mason of Providence,⁸¹ written after the Federalist electors had been chosen, urging that the entire electoral vote be swung over to Clinton, in the hope of choosing him president as the "least of two evils".

Such were the objects, the composition, and the results of this first of national party conventions. Altogether it was an assembly

⁷⁸ Rufus King to Christopher Gore, September 27, 1808. King, *Rufus King*, V. 104.

⁷⁹ Not, at any rate, in the three Federalist newspapers of Providence.

⁸⁰ *An Address to the Citizens of Rhode Island, on the Choice of Electors of President and Vice-President of the United States* (Providence, November, 1808), pp. 13-14. Also in the *Providence Rhode-Island American*, November 17.

⁸¹ To Otis, November 21, 1808.

typical of the Federalist party. A few well-born and congenial gentlemen, who could afford the time and expense of travel, were chosen by their friends to settle in a quiet and leisurely manner the questions that agitated their party. From the body of voters neither authority nor advice was asked, and profound secrecy sheltered the convention's deliberations from vulgar scrutiny. The New York convention of 1808, like all Federalist machinery of the period, was based on the right of the leading men in the party to settle nominations and party business without the slightest co-operation of the people. The voter's advice is not asked, but his implicit obedience is required. He is to vote for candidates nominated he knows not how, because it is thought best by "those who alone from education, fortune, character and principle are entitled to command". Herein lay one of the fundamental principles of the Federalist party, and, in the writer's opinion, the chief cause of its failure. The Federalist machinery failed for the same reason that the entire party failed: it sought to suppress and to curb public opinion rather than to guide and lead it,⁸² and the people preferred "those who are the instruments of their passions" to "those who wou'd controul them". The secret national party convention, representing only the leaders, passed out of existence with the Federalists. It remained for Democratic politicians of the thirties, with improved methods of communication, and fatter campaign chests, to discover that a national convention of delegates, chosen by the body of voters, was the most effective method of nominating a president.

SAMUEL E. MORISON.

⁸² Noah Webster wrote Rufus King, July 6, 1807, "They have attempted to resist the force of a current popular opinion, instead of falling into the current with a view to direct it." King, *Rufus King*, V. 37-38.